

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 22, 2010

The City Council Transportation Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:35 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 22nd day of April, 2010, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilmembers Butler, Cubberley, Kovach, and Chairman Quinn

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Ms. Rebecca Frazier, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Betty Love, Assistant to Doug Myers, CART
Mr. Doug Myers, OU Parking and Transportation Administrator
Ms. Janice Oak, Progressive Independence
Ms. Linda Price, Revitalization Manager
Mr. Cody Ponder, Grants Specialist II for OU
Ms. Wakana Sugimoto, OU Student
Mr. Wayne Wickman, OU Transit Operations Manager
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

DISCUSSION REGARDING CART RIDERSHIP REPORT INCLUDING SAFERIDE AND EXTENDED SERVICE.

Chairman Quinn asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the ridership reports for March and there were none.

Items submitted for the record

1. Norman CART Routes: Total Weekday Passenger Trips, FY 2008-09; Average Daily Passenger Trips, FY 2008-09; CARTaccess, FY 2008-09; Same Day and Zone Two; Weekday Bicycle Totals 2008-09; Saturday Fixed Route; and Average Daily Trips – Saturday Totals

DISCUSSION REGARDING CART EXTENDED ROUTES (LITTLE AXE LINK, WEST NORMAN LINK, AND CLEVELAND COUNTY EXPRESS).

Mr. Doug Myers, OU Parking and Transportation Administrator, said five new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) busses would arrive in October and CART is proposing to purchase six new smaller busses for CARTaccess. Mr. Wayne Wickman, OU Transit Operation Manager, said the smaller busses will consist of three 26 foot CNG 16 passenger with four wheelchair positions and three 29 foot CNG 22 passenger two wheelchair positions. Councilmember Cubberley asked what the savings would be in operations and Mr. Myers said they had not calculated that information yet. Mr. Cody Ponder, Grants Specialist II for OU, said that would make a total of 14 CNG busses out of a fleet of 31 busses.

Mr. Myers said he met with Mayor Rosenthal and was told CART's funding was being reduced 20% from last year and he reviewed the ridership numbers for different routes to determine which routes can be reduced or eliminated. He said the West Norman Link has been in existence for nine months and he is proposing cutting Saturday service and the last two hours of the daily routes. He said the ridership numbers for the last three months have averaged two people for the last two hours, so it did not make sense to continue service for those two hours. Mr. Myers said Saturday service is 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., which runs every thirty minutes and ridership has been zero to eleven riders. Councilmember Cubberley said one of the reasons for initiating the West Norman Link was because of the Norman Healthplex and asked if there was any usage at the hospital. Mr. Ponder said the hospital is the only stop that riders are counted and although there is ridership during the week, there is virtually none on Saturday. Councilmember Cubberley asked how many riders were using the bus during the week and Mr. Ponder said approximately 35% of the ridership travel to the hospital. He said most of the ridership gained recently is due to the Embassy Suites Hotel eliminating their shuttle service during the times the West Norman Link was running. He said CART trained their Staff on utilizing the bus service and how to teach visitors to use the bus service. Chairman Quinn asked if schedules were posted at the bus stops and Mr. Myers said signs are changed accordingly. Mr. Wickman said visitors from Sweden staying at Embassy Suites used the bus service to travel to the Medieval Fair, which was interesting.

Mr. Myers said the Cleveland County Express route will eliminate the Noble and Lexington stops due to low or no ridership and they are not a part of Norman. He said CART proposed to eliminate one Sooner Express route, which currently makes seven stops. He said the 1:50 p.m. stop could be eliminated as there are usually on five riders compared to twenty at other times of the day and would have the least impact. Mr. Myers said Oklahoma City (OKC) is increasing the rates on the Sooner Express and since CART performs that bus service in conjunction with OKC, CART will increase their rates as well. He said the Sooner Express will no longer accept the Community Block Grant (CDBG) bus passes or transfer tickets.

Mr. Myers said the Little Axe route currently makes four round trips per day and CART is proposing to decrease that by half. He said he had originally considered eliminating the route completely; however, he recently attended an Inclusive Community meeting in Little Axe and found a need for employment purposes. He said CART is working with Citadel and Officemax to coincide the bus schedule with employees work schedules. Chairman Butler asked if CART knew citizens in the Little Axe area worked at these two locations and Mr. Myers said he did not know that for sure but Citadel wants to contract to advertise "Now Hiring" on the Little Axe vehicle so it makes sense to match the schedules with the working hours.

Mr. Myers said Zone Two service is service outside the fixed routes and travel to Norman City limits and he is proposing eliminating one day of service and cut the last two hours of service. He said he did not have a day selected, but it would be a day with the least impact on riders. He said this service takes citizens to Lake Thunderbird, Thunderbird Casino, as well as to jobs, shopping, doctors appointments, etc.

Mr. Myers said he would hold two public meetings, with Council's support, on the proposed changes with one meeting held in Little Axe and the other at City Hall or the Norman Public Library. He said if funding cuts increase, CART will need to eliminate some of these routes.

Chairman Quinn said the City Manager has proposed a budget that eliminates funding for the West Norman Link and asked if these proposals absorb keeping that route going and Mr. Myers said yes. Mr. Myers said the West Norman Link is new, the ridership continues to increase each month, the Healthplex and Embassy Suites has worked with CART training their employees and encouraging them to use the bus service and he feels the route needs more time to prove its worth. Chairman Quinn agreed and said the cuts CART has made makes very good sense and are defensible. Mr. Ponder said eliminating the West Norman Link would place the Healthplex back into Zone Two service so instead of a \$2.00 round trip, it would be a \$5.00 round trip placing an increased burden on low income citizens accessing medical needs.

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

Ms. Janice Oak, Progressive Independence, said she has been selected by the Easter Seals Project Action to attend a course in travel training next week in Denver, Colorado. She said one stipulation of the course is to develop curriculum to train everyone on how to use public transportation and submit a report within three months. She said she will update the Committee at the next meeting.

Ms. Linda Price, Revitalization Manager, said CART had notified her they will run out of funds for the CDBG bus passes by the end of April. She said the cost averages around \$3,500 per month for bus passes and they would need an estimated \$7,000 for the remainder of FYE 10. She said, originally, she calculated CDBG had \$3,500, but would have to be approved by the Policy Committee as well as the City Council. She said she worried this would set open the floodgate for other agencies that are funded through CDBG. Councilmember Cubberley said the bus pass program is critical for some citizens to get around and he suggested funding half through CDBG and half from the General Fund to get through the remaining fiscal year. Councilmember Cubberley said he would speak with the City Manager regarding funds from the General Fund. Councilmember Butler asked if there is more money proposed in the FYE 2011 Budget in case of another shortfall and Councilmember Cubberley said no. Mr. Myers said CART should be in better shape next year due to various changes he will be proposing through CDBG and automatic fare boxes. He said automatic passenger counting software will also be installed in each bus this summer. Chairman Quinn asked if the passes had destination restrictions and Mr. Myers said they can go anywhere and Mr. Ponder reminded them that the Sooner Express will not be accepting CDBG passes so they will not be able to travel to OKC. Councilmember Cubberley asked how many passes are used on the Sooner Express currently and Mr. Ponder said possibly up to seven people per day, but he would have to verify that.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.